

Doctors of Chiropractic: Choosing the Right Specialist

When choosing any medical professional, the key is to find one that you are comfortable with and who meets your specific health care needs. Such things as education and training, treatment philosophy, communication skills, and personality are important, but so are other, more practical things, such as office hours, location, and cost.

The following are a few things you may want to consider when choosing a Doctor of Chiropractic. Once you have found a chiropractor you like, ask yourself the questions listed at the end of the article to make sure you made the right choice.

A chiropractor has the initials DC after his or her name. This stands for Doctor of Chiropractic. The educational requirements for Doctors of Chiropractic are similar to that of Doctors of Medicine (MDs) and generally include 4 years of undergraduate study, (usually pre-med) and 4-5 additional years of advanced study in the following areas:

- Pharmacology
- Orthopaedics
- Biochemistry
- Radiology
- Anatomy
- Nutrition
- Physiology
- Diagnosis
- Neurology
- Biomechanics
- Chiropractic techniques
- Rehabilitation
- Internship

The first 2 years of chiropractic and medical school are very similar. In fact, many chiropractic colleges rotate interns through hospital rounds with medical students. The main differences occur in the third or fourth years of study when medical schools emphasize drugs and surgery while chiropractic schools emphasize biomechanics, radiology, adjustments, and physical medicine.

Currently, there are around 15 Chiropractic Colleges in the United States accredited by the Council on Chiropractic Education and recognized by the Department of Education. Chiropractors are licensed in all 50 states. National and state licensing boards regulate the practice of chiropractic and grant licenses to chiropractors who meet stringent educational and examination requirements.

Like Medical Doctors, Chiropractors can chose to specialize in certain areas of interest through post-graduate training. Specialty councils offer programs leading to clinical specialty certification, called "diplomate" certification, in the following areas:

Neurology
Orthopaedics
Sports injuries
Occupational health
Nutrition
Radiology
Internal disorders
Forensic sciences

Finding a Chiropractor that is Right for You:

There are many ways to find a chiropractor. You can ask your primary care doctor for a recommendation, ask people you know who go to a chiropractor, look in the phone book, or on the Internet for directories of chiropractors.

Many quality health insurance plans offer chiropractic coverage. In fact, chiropractic is covered by Medicare/Medicaid, many auto insurance policies, and is currently being considered for coverage by the US military health service.

The following questions may be helpful in determining if the chiropractor you have selected is the right one for you. Remember, if you are unsure about a chiropractor, get a second opinion. There are many chiropractors that offer expert chiropractic consultations at no cost.

Experience:

How long has the doctor been in practice?

Does the doctor have a specialty that is related to your health care needs?

Is the doctor experienced in performing procedures you are interested in?

How many procedures of this kind does the doctor perform each year?

Credentials:

Did the doctor attend and graduate from an accredited chiropractic school?

Does the doctor keep up with post-graduate studies?

Does the doctor hold advanced specialty certifications?

Is the doctor licensed to practice chiropractic in your state?

Doctor:

Do you feel comfortable with the chiropractor?

Do you like his or her personality?

Are your concerns or questions answered completely and understandably?

Are you comfortable with all phases of the process including consultation, examination, treatment, and follow-up?

Staff:

Are the office staff pleasant and helpful if you have a question?

Do you feel you are being treated with respect and courtesy by the staff?
Are you able to reach the doctor if you have questions?

Office:

Are the office hours convenient for you?

Is the office located near your home or work?

Is the office clean and equipment well kept?

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